

# Keeney Chronicles



OCTOBER 2015

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

*Mrs. Martin*

Greetings Keeney Community,

As you know, school is a place for students to develop a range of skills that include both academic and non-academic behaviors. We have children coming to us for whom the most important skills to develop are math, writing, or reading skills. We also have children coming to us for whom the most important skills to develop are self-management, emotional regulation, or social skills. Our job in schools is to teach *all* children and develop *all* the unique skills and strengths they bring to us. This job is exciting, challenging, and essential to our mission of cultivating a school culture where students grow to become productive and happy citizens of our world.

In this month's newsletter, you will learn about how we are supporting the development of social and emotional skills in our students. You will read about the district's approach to developing social emotional learning that is based on the work of Michelle Garcia Winner ([www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)) as well as ways Keeney is promoting the idea of caring about people in your community. We are teaching our students to be Social Thinkers by teaching them about whole body listening and thinking about others thoughts and feelings in kindergarten through second grade. Our third through fifth graders are learning about becoming **Social Detectives**. They will be learning about using their social smarts to do what is expected and how to keep others having good thoughts and feelings about them. It is a research supported curriculum and has demonstrated positive impact on students by helping them become aware of how their behavior impacts other

people's thoughts and feelings. Hopefully your kindergarten or first grade student has talked about Whole Body **Listening Larry** and how you listen with your ears, eyes, feet, hands, and heart. And if you have an older student, you may have heard about expected and unexpected behavior, how you keep your body and brain in the group and thinking with your eyes. Throughout the year you will learn more about this curriculum through classroom newsletters.

In addition to the social thinking curriculum, we are working on ways to make sure our school is a positive place for all of us to learn and grow. We are practicing kindness through "bucket filling" which is a concept that teaches that all of us have an invisible bucket that can be filled with good feelings by people who are around us. We give compliments, offer assistance, or simply smile and greet each other to fill our "buckets". We are also teaching the concept of "checking in" when someone is feeling hurt or upset. You will notice on the walls in our hallways that there are graphics of examples of how to check in with people. Both the bucket filling and checking in concepts support our work with the social thinking curriculum in that they provide students with direct instruction on how to take care of each other and build a stronger school community.

Please feel free to use the language we are using in school to support your child at home. And enjoy reading about the holistic ways in which we are taking care of your children here at school.





"Social Thinking is a well balanced curriculum. It is fun for kids of all ages and helps with behaviors and thinking about others in all settings - from school to home. Personally I think that it is a wonderful way to teach and reiterate expected behaviors and how making good choices makes everyone feel good about others and about ourselves. I am lucky to have had previous experience using this curriculum and am thrilled to see it moving across town. We are lucky at Keeney to be diving in! "

~ Mrs. Gordon, 5th grade teacher

"We talk about the polite thing to do and we also practice with our role playing."

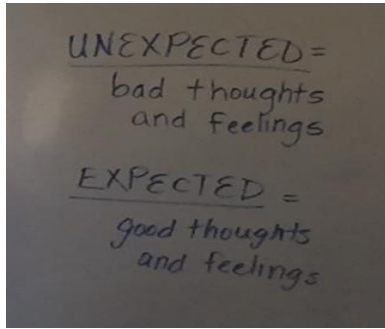
~Jonathan, 5th grade student

"It's awesome! We get to help people and have fun with them. It's exciting because you can make a new friend."

~ Malik, 5th grade student

"The social thinking program is where we learn to use our brain, body and eyes. We also learn to part a part of the group so people will have good thoughts about us."

~ Sophie, 5th grade student



*Mrs. Gordon's students discuss scenarios of how to respond to a person's bad thought or feeling and thereby changing it into good thoughts or feelings.*

## Keeney Cubs are Becoming Social Detectives!

*More information from Mrs. Ciobotaru, our school psychologist:*

To quote Michelle Garcia Winner “It’s our social mind that keeps people working together in the classroom. It helps us not only figure out what people mean by what they say and do but also how people want us to respond to help them feel comfortable.” A big piece of the Social Thinking curriculum is using common language so that students are consistently reminded to be socially conscious. Here are a few of the key concepts that we’ll be talking about:

**SOCIAL THINKING**- The idea that we are social thinkers everyday whether it is at home or in the classroom. We should be aware that people around us have thoughts and feelings. It includes sharing a space with others effectively and understanding the perspective and intentions of others.

**WHOLE BODY LISTENING**-Idea that the whole body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, bottom, and brain) needs to be focused on the group in order to listen and show you are listening.

**EXPECTED BEHAVIORS** -Understanding that a range of hidden rules exist in every situation and people are responsible for figuring out what those rules are and then following them. By doing so, we keep other people thinking good thoughts about us. Doing what is expected is different based on where we are and who we are with.

**UNEXPECTED BEHAVIORS**-Failing to follow the set of rules, hidden or stated, in the environment. People who don’t follow the rules are doing what is ‘unexpected’ and people may have “uncomfortable” or ‘weird’ thoughts about them.

Adina Ciobotrau  
School Psychologist

# “COMMUNITY” LUNCH GROUPS

Lunch groups are back and our 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders are as engaged as ever! As one of the most popular activities offered by the Family Resource Center, the room is filled (often to capacity) with students eager to discuss their lives, their ideas, and our weekly topics. The theme of the first Lunch Group series is “Community”.

Students and adults hear a lot about “our community”, community service, and community activities, but they might not realize how many communities they really belong to. Our first couple weeks have been spent defining what exactly makes a community and identifying the different communities we take part in. We have come up with many definitions in each group, but a central idea has come up in every time: “A community is a group of people that helps and supports each other.” From there, we’ve discussed our participation in neighborhood communities, school communities, sports communities, and more.

In the coming weeks, we will be discussing the needs that community members may have and how we can be active, engaged participants in our community to answer those needs. Whether those needs may be food and shelter or socio-emotional support, every community has needs and every member can help respond to them. The best part is, while students discuss these topics, they are getting the opportunity to participate in our own little Lunch Group community, discussing issues that matter to them and supporting each other in a safe, judgment-free zone.

Lunch Group series run for 6 weeks at a time, with a different theme for each series. A permission slip goes out several weeks prior to the start of each Lunch Group series, so if your 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grader is interested in participating in the next round of Lunch Groups, be on the lookout for the slip!



John Fournier  
Family Resource Center Coordinator  
Keeney and Martin Elementary Schools  
Keeney Phone: 860.645.4822



## Pink Is Not Just For .....?

Some of my favorite shirts are pink, and I swear I get more compliments when I wear them than any other color of clothing.....

I was stunned when I found out that in 1927, *Time* magazine printed a chart showing sex-appropriate colors for girls and boys according to leading U.S. stores. In Boston, Filene's told parents to dress boys in pink. So did Best & Co. in New York City, Halle's in Cleveland and Marshall Field in Chicago.

Somehow in the 1940's manufacturers settled on pink for girls and blue for boys. With the advent of the women's liberation movement colors became more gender neutral. Then once again society made a shift back to pink for girls and blue for boys when ultra sounds could predict the gender of a child and people wanted to plan the clothing and decorate rooms in advance of the baby's birth.

Where though did we adopt all the other social constructs such as trucks are for the boys and dolls are for the girls. I have heard this said by children in our classes. I like to let them know that they can play with whatever interests them. That they should not be limited in life to conform to what someone else expects of them.

I hope all our schools are teaching children that the sky is not the limit, that they should explore work and talents that bring them joy and inspiration in life. What brings someone joy and fulfillment should not be narrowed by constructs that society may or may not place on them. Let us teach children to explore and express their talents and creativity wherever and however to enable them to be the most productive and fulfilled humans possible.



Tom Nicholas  
School Social Worker  
Keeney Elementary School  
860-645-4826 ext.54820

# **“What Happened to Suspending Kids?”**

*From Mrs. Martin*

I am often asked what happens when students “break the rules”. Are they suspended? Are their parents contacted? Is the consequence severe? I think it is fair to assume that all parents have wanted those questions answered at some point. We all want to know that when we send our child to school they will be safe, happy, and protected. As school personnel, we also want that and it is our priority to do what we can to ensure the safety and happiness of every child who attends Keeney. So how do we do that?

**1. We Build Partnerships:** It is a district-wide focus to cultivate partnerships with all families. This strengthens our home-school connection and creates a school community that extends beyond the building walls. In addition to this wide reaching effort, we are intentional about establishing relationships with families who may need more support. Children who struggle with behavior need a community to surround them, not exclude them. They need to be in school with multiple opportunities to engage productively in their community. While this is a focus, it is also important to note there are cases that require us to remove a student to ensure the safety of the school community.

**2. We Teach Lagging Skills:** Children who struggle with behavior are not bad children and do not come from bad families. Instead, they are children who need specific skill instruction and time to practice developing skills. This skill instruction takes place through the Social Thinking Curriculum as well as through specific adult interventions.

**3. We Focus on Repairing Harm:** When a child has done harm to someone, we ask her to check in with the person harmed and find out what can be done to repair that harm. This repair may be an apology, or a request to have space, or something entirely different. Last year a student who was harmed by another said, “I’d like you to apologize but I’m not going to believe things are better until you treat me better for 4 or 5 days.” The child who did the harm wanted to prove things were better and focused on that for the rest of the year.

**4. We Redefine Consequences:** Our goal is never to make a child feel shamed about what they did. We are moving away from *punishment* which holds you accountable to rules, “You disrupted the class so you have to serve lunch detention.” to *discipline* which holds you accountable to your community and your own character, “You disrupted the class so you need to learn to manage impulsivity so you can return to your community.”

**5. We Emphasize Relationships:** The important work of student learning cannot happen in the absence of relationships. Relationships between child and adult, child and child, and adult and adult. This is especially important when we consider our service to children who are struggling socially or emotionally.

I hope this newsletter has begun to increase family understanding around those questions. This work is challenging and exciting. We know when we come together as a community, whether in a classroom or neighborhood, we encounter people with different needs. Sometimes those needs bump into each other. This approach to supporting social and emotional development honors those needs and helps students learn how to contribute to and learn from a diverse community with many gifts.

# Genius Hour Parent Session

*Genius Hour: A time for 2nd - 5th grade students to explore their interests and passions!*

Would you like to learn more about Genius Hour and what it is all about? Then come to a parent session to hear about the purpose of genius hour and the benefits it can have for your child.

When: Thursday, October 29 @ 6:00

Where: Keeney Library

What to bring: Your curiosity about Genius Hour and your knowledge of your child

Please send in the bottom portion of this form to school if you plan to attend so that we can plan appropriately. "Mr. John", our Family Resource Coordinator, will be supporting this session by providing activities for your children and giving additional information to families.

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Number of people attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child(ren) at Keeney: \_\_\_\_\_

Grades of Child(ren) at Keeney: \_\_\_\_\_



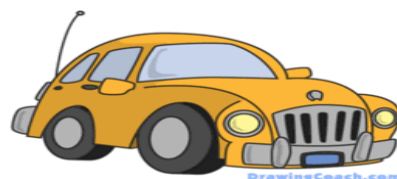


**School starts at:**  
**9:05**

If your child arrives to school after 9:05  
an adult must accompany them into the office



and sign them in.



## Arrival and Dismissal Reminders:

### **Morning Drop-Off**

#### MELC

Parents may park in the bus loop to drop kids off at MELC **before 8:15 am**. After 8:15 we ask you to park in the lot and escort your child to free the loop for Pre-K drop-off.

#### Pre-K

Parents dropping off Pre-K students are asked to join the bus loop and remain in the car. Pre-K staff will escort kids to and from the building. To make room for the larger K-5 buses arriving around 8:35 am, we ask that Pre-K parents arriving on campus after 8:35 am to park on Primer Road and walk your child to the building.

#### Walkers

Cars are welcome to join the side loop to drop kids off in the morning. We ask that you follow the cues of staff members directing traffic.

### **Afternoon Pick Up**

#### Kindergarten

Kindergarten students are dismissed from the front door a few minutes prior to dismissal. Guardians are encouraged to meet them as they are escorted out of the building.

#### Grades 1-5

All other "walking" cubs will exit the side gym door. Staff members will assist students to their cars. **We ask that no one park and/or exit vehicles in the car loop** as we need to keep traffic moving.

### **Other Reminders:**

- Please do not park in the handicapped spots unless you have the designated handicapped plate
- Please do not park in front of the stop signs
- Please do not park in front of parked cars, blocking their exit path

We recognize that picking up your child in the afternoon may at times take longer than we'd like. Please remember that safety is the priority. We are working with the town traffic officers to assist us in our traffic flow but for now, please remember that being a little late to your destination is a better alternative to someone getting hurt.

# **Keeney Street School PTA**

## **Welcome Keeney Families!**

Happy Fall everyone! We hope that you're enjoying the cooler autumn air. It was wonderful to see so many of you at our back to school picnic; catching up and meeting new friends.

Here at Keeney Street School your child is supported by a very active and energetic Parent Teacher Association or PTA. Your membership and fundraiser participation is so important to help fund upcoming assemblies, field trips, school supplies and enrichment programs for our kids this year. We want to give a big **THANK YOU** to everyone that has joined PTA and supported our fundraising so far. The children of Keeney School, our "Cubs" are our priority.

**Please join us at our next meeting *Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-7:30pm in the school cafeteria.* Our Special Guest Speakers will be our new STEM teachers, Kara Seaha and Jodi Soloperto. Come and find out what your child has been learning about in their STEM class! Bring the kids! We provide childcare with the Lutz Children's Museum during our meetings. Please check us out - you'll be glad you did!**

#### **Special Thanks to the following individuals:**

- Jesse Johnson and Niki Garcia for organizing our Fall Fundraiser with the Cristoline Company. Be sure to place your orders for pies, cookies and soups this week.
- Pat Allen along with the help of Tamara Speaks and all of our volunteers from Keeney, Bennet and Illing for organizing our Annual Back to School picnic. A very big thank you to all of the teachers and staff that came out to show their support!! It was a blast!
- Michelle DiPietro, Niki Garcia, Tamara & Albert Speaks Jr., Toni Zanks, Pat Allen, Kelly LeClair, Connie Anglin, Erika DiPietro, Amber Moriarty Jr., and all of the individuals that volunteered at our Open House. We were happy to see so many families come to visit their children's school!
- Tamara Speaks & Pat Allen and the MANY volunteers that participate and coach our Running Club weekly. This is an amazing program for our cubs and we couldn't do it without your support!!!
- Niki & Alexa Garcia, Keren, Jayden and Jordan Prescott, Pat Allen, Renee Bishop, Amber Moriarty Jr. and all of the volunteers that helped set up,

organize, donate and clean up at our First Annual Keeney Community Tag Sale. It was a wonderful day and the PTA was able to earn over \$450 from your generous contributions!!

### **October PTA Fundraisers and Family Events:**

- No School – **Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup>** – Columbus Day
- Picture Day – **Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>**
- Early Dismissal – **Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>** at 1:17pm.
- Our Fall **Cristoline Fundraiser** – **part 2** went home. Be sure and check out all of the delicious soups, pies, and cookies which will be delivered just in time for your Thanksgiving entertaining! Order deadline is **Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>**. Thank you for your support!
- Spirit Day - **Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>**. It's Storybook Character Day! Dress as your favorite Storybook Character. We will have a character parade through our halls that day. A suggested \$1 donation to your Keeney PTA is greatly appreciated!
- Trunk-or-Treat - One of our Favorite Annual Traditions here at Keeney will be on **Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>** from 5:30-7:00pm. Join our cubs for a spooktacular **FREE** evening of trick-or-treating from car to car. If you're planning on decorating your car, please arrive by 5:00pm. This is an event that you won't want to miss!
- November PTA Meeting will be held on **Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>** at 6:30pm in the cafeteria. Our Special Guest Speakers will be our new STEM teachers, Kara Seaha and Jodi Soloperto. Bring the kids...The Lutz will be on hand with an educational program!
- Box Tops for Education. There is a collection bin in the hallway, right in front of the school office. Please send in your box tops and be sure they have not expired. Questions...email Connie Anglin at [Connie@company23.com](mailto:Connie@company23.com). Help us make a difference for the Keeney Cubs.

### **Volunteer Opportunities:**

- We are in need of volunteers to help sort and distribute our Cristoline orders when they come arrive.
- Talent Show Co-Chair – An annual tradition at Keeney, our Talent Show is looking for people to co-chair the event this spring. We will guide you through the process. This is an event that our cubs love to participate in.

Come to our next meeting on **Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>** and find out how you too can get involved. We look forward to meeting you all!